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COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

B-119033

August 30, 1979

The Honorable Abraham Ribicoff  
Chairman, Committee on  
Governmental Affairs  
United States Senate

*SENATOR*

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This is in response to your request for our views on S.1239, a bill to amend title 5, United States Code, to provide for access to qualified professional psychiatric nurse practitioners without prior referral in the Federal Employees Health Benefits program.

We have found from our review of other federally funded health programs, that psychiatric benefits have been particularly susceptible to abuse. Enclosed for your information are two reports we have issued on this area. Accordingly, we would not favor passage of S.1239, which would enable an additional category of psychiatric care provider to receive direct reimbursement without requiring referral by a physician, until an evaluation has been made of (1) the necessity and benefits of the proposed legislation and (2) the adequacy of controls to prevent abuse.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this bill.

Sincerely yours,

*R. G. Kilian*  
Deputy Comptroller General  
of the United States

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